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1 SUB-COMMITTEE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

Tuesday, Sept. 24, 1946

Notes on the terms, Political and Psychological Warfare:

1. The terms political warfare and psychological warfare have been loosely used both by organizations operating in the fields they delimit, and by qualified students and publicists. For the purposes of present organization planning, it is recommended that we think of these terms in the following interrelations:

a. Political Warfare is the use of all political means to influence a foreign State to act in conformity with the requirements of our foreign policy. Political warfare is a part of our foreign policy, and can be waged at any time that the national interest requires it. It can use any means short of physical or military violence, including economic pressure and bargaining and information and propaganda, to achieve its objectives. It continues in time of war as in times of de jure peace, and at all times must be constantly related to our foreign policy.

b. Psychological Warfare is a wartime expansion of peace-time political warfare, adding to political warfare the functions of combat propaganda, subversion, deception, and black operations. It is of paramount necessity to coordinate psychological warfare with all types of military operations and to continue political control of all its political implications.

2. The instruments for making national policy effective are the

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international field consist of diplomacy (negotiation and bargaining among governmental representatives), economic bargaining and pressure, the threat or employment of military force, and information and propaganda. Information and propaganda must be applied in conjunction with action in the other three fields, for maximum effect.

3. Maximum effectiveness in the management of our foreign relations can only be achieved if all four instruments are used in a planned and coordinated fashion. It is necessary for those persons in charge of planning, coordination, and execution to be keenly aware of the capabilities and potentialities of the various techniques offered by all four elements.

4. The State Department is responsible for the planning and policy control of the execution of all phases of our foreign policy. The Department has recently established an Office of International Information and is conducting a program of world-wide information and cultural relations which could serve as an agency to execute many aspects of a program of political warfare, if one is required by our national policy. Other arms of the Department are similarly in a position to execute other aspects. The Department has absorbed many persons who were active in the political and psychological warfare programs executed during the last war, and thus has acquired a good deal of the available know-how concerning the use and coordination of propaganda with other instruments of foreign policy. Hence there is a strong case for centralizing the organization

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to plan for political warfare in the Department. It may be advisable, for smoother coordination with other interested Departments, to establish a permanent subcommittee of SWNCC to deal with inter-departmental policy aspects of the function.

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SUB-COMMITTEE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

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Shortcomings of World War II Organization for Psychological Warfare,  
at home and in the field:

1. Background:

a. Policy:

World War II organization for the planning, control, and execution of psychological warfare, evolved steadily until in early 1944, when a relatively stable organization was established in Washington, and the general pattern for handling the function in theaters of operations had been worked out at AFHQ. In Washington, the Office of War Information emerged as the agency responsible for planning and executing the Federal program of overseas information and propaganda, within the limits of foreign policy, and subject to the proviso that in a theater of operation, the theater commander controlled execution. OWI had an Overseas Planning Board, on which were represented in addition to top OWI officials, members of the State Department and of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. CIAA and the British Political Warfare Mission attended as observers, for purposes of information and coordination. This Board cleared a weekly Central Directive for conformity to military operations and foreign policy. The Directive governed a series of daily guidances which controlled the OWI overseas output, and which were communicated to OWI offices and to major Psychological Warfare agencies in military commands abroad, as the

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established U.S. government propaganda policy. In London a Joint Directive was worked out between the American and British civilian propaganda agencies, which was communicated to European Theater military and other field organizations, as joint policy to govern all joint propaganda operations. A similar joint directive was worked out in SEAC.

b. Execution:

The chief agency for execution of psychological warfare was the OWI Overseas Branch. OSS had extensive black operations as well, which included some propaganda. In Washington, these phases were coordinated with OWI overt operations by informal cooperation. In military theaters, they were coordinated through normal command channels and such organizations as PWD/SHAEP and PWB/AFHQ. The Army and Navy both conducted psychological warfare operations, partly through OWI and OSS agencies, partly through their own outlets, which involved procurement, organization, development, and training of personnel and equipment. Considerable cooperation was given to OWI and OSS in the transfer overseas of equipment and personnel, and in the discharge of other administrative tasks.

2. Shortcomings:

a. Dispersion of authority and responsibility among several Washington agencies.

b. Friction and distrust among top officials and operating personnel of the various agencies concerned.

c. Lack of adequate coordination on the planning and policy

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level, between military plans and operations, the planning and execution of foreign policy, and the conduct of world propaganda.

d. Lack of understanding of the nature, capabilities and effectiveness of psychological warfare by the top military and political leadership of the nation.

3. Dispersion of authority and responsibility:

The failure to concentrate all psychological warfare operations in one agency, trusted and utilized by the War, State and Navy Departments, led unavoidably to duplication of effort, competition for available supplies and personnel, faulty coordination with the major military, political, and economic programs of the government, and lessened striking effectiveness on the propaganda fronts throughout the world.

4. Friction and Distrust:

Responsibility for the control of policies intimately related to the execution of the propaganda program was dispersed among the chiefs of the Service agencies, the OWI, the Office of Censorship and the State Department. These policies governed what could be disclosed, and what must be revealed. The chiefs of the Service agencies were concerned to protect military security and to further the needs and demands of the theater commanders, who in turn were chiefly concerned with the specific military and political problems confronting them. The OWI was concerned with the fullest possible disclosure of all information pertaining to the war effort, and in particular all information and news which would further the political and propaganda policies of the country. The fact that the

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Director of OWI was concerned with disclosure weighed against him in the decisions of the service chiefs concerning the time and extent to which he would be informed of military plans and military situations. Strong disagreements between prominent OWI personnel and the State Department concerning various aspects of our foreign policy led to friction between these agencies, and failure to give adequate guidance, in time, in the field of foreign policy. The military leadership felt that the civilian propagandists could not be trusted with information of advance plans, even of the level of generality represented by Combined Chiefs of Staff directives. On the other hand, civilian agency employees in the field, under the military control of the theater commander, were often in possession of such information, and were not seldom in a position of having to take positions disapproved by or unknown to their civilian superiors, but desired by their theater command, which they could not justify to the world propaganda organization by referring to operational requirements. The results were great friction and confusion, and loss of driving power on the world propaganda front. It was not until late in the war that a modus operandi was worked out, which even then only partially solved the problems as the basis for the difficulties — dispersion of authority and distrust -- were not removed.

5. Lack of Adequate Coordination on Policy:

Despite the operation of the Planning Board and the nomination of representatives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and of the State Department

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to clear policy problems raised in the course of OWI operations, coordination was not adequate in many cases because the personnel nominated as representatives were not themselves capable of giving policy clearance, and in some cases were not even in possession of the policy information necessary to make the required decision. Consequently OWI was forced by operational requirements into the position of making policy decisions (or intelligence estimates) without firm knowledge of the basic policy requirements, or ability to get clearance for concrete proposals.

6. Lack of Understanding by Political and Military Leaders:

The really basic shortcoming was lack of comprehension of, or interest in the employment of psychological warfare, on the part of our political and military top leadership. This lack was at bottom responsible for the lack of concentration of organization, leadership, responsibility, and control of the function; lack of access of propaganda chiefs to vital information on political and military plans, and the faults of administrative organization arising from this dispersion and lack of top direction. We as a nation have abhorred propaganda, and all the more so the extensions of psychological warfare into subversion, sabotage, deception, espionage, and the like. Only the stress of all-out warfare and the shock of Pearl Harbor made possible the little we did. There had been no advance planning, no training of personnel, no perfecting of techniques, no establishment of organizations capable of expansion to cope with wartime problem, prior to the onset of shooting war. Psychological warfare organization has had a history of

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improvisation and struggle -- not always with the enemy -- without strong central leadership, control, or integration with the other methods of attaining national objectives. Information and propaganda were well coordinated throughout with censorship; taken together they were only imperfectly coordinated with the other aspects of the national effort.

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